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Good morning Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. I would like to express my support for SB 658 AN ACT REQUIRING EMPLOYERS TO RECALL LAID-OFF WORKERS IN ORDER OF SENIORITY, SB 660 AN ACT EXPANDING WORKERS' COMPENSATION BENEFITS FOR MENTAL OR EMOTIONAL IMPAIRMENTS SUFFERED BY ALL WORKERS, SB 666 AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN MENTAL OR EMOTIONAL IMPAIRMENTS AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR CORRECTIONAL STAFF, EMERGENCY MEDICAL STAFF AND DISPATCHERS, and SB 668 AN ACT CONCERNING A FAIR WORK WEEK SCHEDULE..

SB 658 would create protections for laid off workers by requiring that they be rehired in order of seniority. This will protect workers who have been laid off such that when they are called back, they will return to their former jobs at their former rate of pay and conditions of work. It would protect these employees from being forced to re-apply for their jobs as if they were new employees and being hired at a much lower rate of pay. This protection will be needed as our economy improves as we get COVID under control. The last year has been a long year

for employees in our state as they have struggled with the economic hardship caused by the pandemic. We owe them a fair deal and a level playing field as they work to regain their former economic standing.

In 1993, the General Assembly made a mistake; it changed the law and denied workers' compensation benefits to employees suffering from a mental or emotional impairment as a direct result of witnessing the death or maiming of another human being whose death or maiming was caused by an act of a person. In recent years medical science has made it increasingly clear that a mental health impairment is as disabling as a physical impairment. Today there is a far more sophisticated understanding of the causes and seriousness of mental and emotional impairments. It is time to correct that mistake and allow all workers who suffer a mental or emotional impairment in this way access to workers' compensation regardless of whether the employee suffered a physical injury. SB 660 would provide this protection for all employees and I believe that would be the best path forward. SB 666 would build on PA 19-17 and expand the categories of employees who could receive workers' compensation for this type of injury. I would, of course, support those efforts as well.

Since 1993 advances in neuroscience have demonstrated that the injuries caused by the trauma of witnessing a violent death or maiming are indeed real and when such injuries occur in connection with employment they should be compensable to the extent that the General Assembly provided coverage to first responders in PA 19-17¹. The coverage in that Act limits benefits to 52 weeks after the diagnosis date. It also prohibits any of these benefits from being

¹ <http://cgalites/olr/searchdocs.asp>

awarded beyond four years after the qualifying event that formed the basis for the PTSD and it prohibits an officer or firefighter who is receiving PTSD benefits from receiving workers' compensation permanent partial disability benefits. The act further limits an officer's or firefighter's PTSD benefits by prohibiting them from exceeding the officer's or firefighter's average weekly wage when combined with his or her other benefits, including those received from contributory and noncontributory retirement systems, Social Security, and long-term or short-term disability plans.

The more limited legislation would not assist employees such as teachers and other employees who witness school shootings such as at Sandy Hook or co-workers at the Lottery Corporation or Hartford Distributors. None of these employees would have a compensable injury without a physical component. It is beyond time for a change to reflect current scientific understanding of the causes and effects of mental impairments.

SB 668 would require employers to provide employees with at least 24 hours' notice of their shifts. This would greatly improve the quality of life for shift workers who currently have little control over their own schedules and can be left in a nearly impossible scramble to make arrangements for child care and other matters. The bill will not prohibit employees from working if they receive less than 24 hours' notice of their shift, as long as they mutually agree to do so with their employer.

Thank you for hearing these bills that will protect Connecticut's workforce as the state recovers from the COVID pandemic.